

Map — courtesy Wheelwright Lithographing Co.

The Mormon trek

said, 'had abundant game and timber and clear water everywhere. Now you are driven away in the same manner from your lodges and lands and the graves of your people. So we have both suffered. We must help one another and the Great Spirit will help us both.'

"How did the Mormons get along at Council Bluffs and Florence during that winter?" Elizabeth asked.

The teacher replied, "They suffered terribly from exposure to the severe cold winter weather and from improper diet and lack of food. Their experiences that winter constitute one of the sad chapters in United States history.

"Weakened by the hard trip from Nauvoo and the lack of sufficient vegetables in their diet, the people became easy victims of scurvy, malaria, and other diseases. Over 600 deaths occurred in the camps on the Missouri during the winter of 1846-1847.

"But in spite of all that had happened, the exiled Saints retained a cheerful and hopeful attitude, so history affirms.

"Today, with pride, the citizens of Omaha show tourists the beautiful monument at Winter Quarter's cemetery, placed there by the L.D.S. Church in

1936 in memory of the sacrifice made by the founders of Utah while crossing the plains," the teacher pointed out.

Preparing to migrate westward

"Mr. Madsen, how did the exiled Mormons spend their time during that cold winter?" Stephen asked.

"Brigham Young and his people during the fall and winter (1846-1847) at Council Bluffs and Winter Quarters, Stephen, again made extensive preparations for their journey westward. Many of the able-bodied men who had not gone to California with the Battalion sought work in the various frontier towns of Iowa and Illinois. Their earnings were sent to the 'Camps of Israel,' as they were called, on the Missouri River, in the form of food and other necessary articles which would be of use on their westward trek and in their new homes upon their arrival. Grain, bacon, livestock, and other supplies were purchased.

"The people camped on the banks of the Missouri were also very busy. A gristmill was built at Winter Quarters and a supply of flour was ground. Early each morning everyone was up and at work. The women were busy knitting,

spinning, and making clothing to be used on their continued journey.

"Thus throughout the entire winter of 1846-1847, the exiles worked hard in making preparations for the westward migration which the leaders announced would take place when spring arrived.

"Days grew warmer and gentle rains replaced the cold winter blizzards. Grass appeared on the open plains which had for months been blanketed with snow. Spring was here; the Mormon exiles must again be on the move in search for a place to build their homes," the teacher explained.

Pioneer company crossing the plains

"Now, class," Mr. Madsen suggested, "as we talk about the first pioneer company crossing the plains to Utah, I wish each of you would imagine he is a member of that company. Try to experience in your minds what the pioneers actually went through, to increase your understanding of their contribution to history.

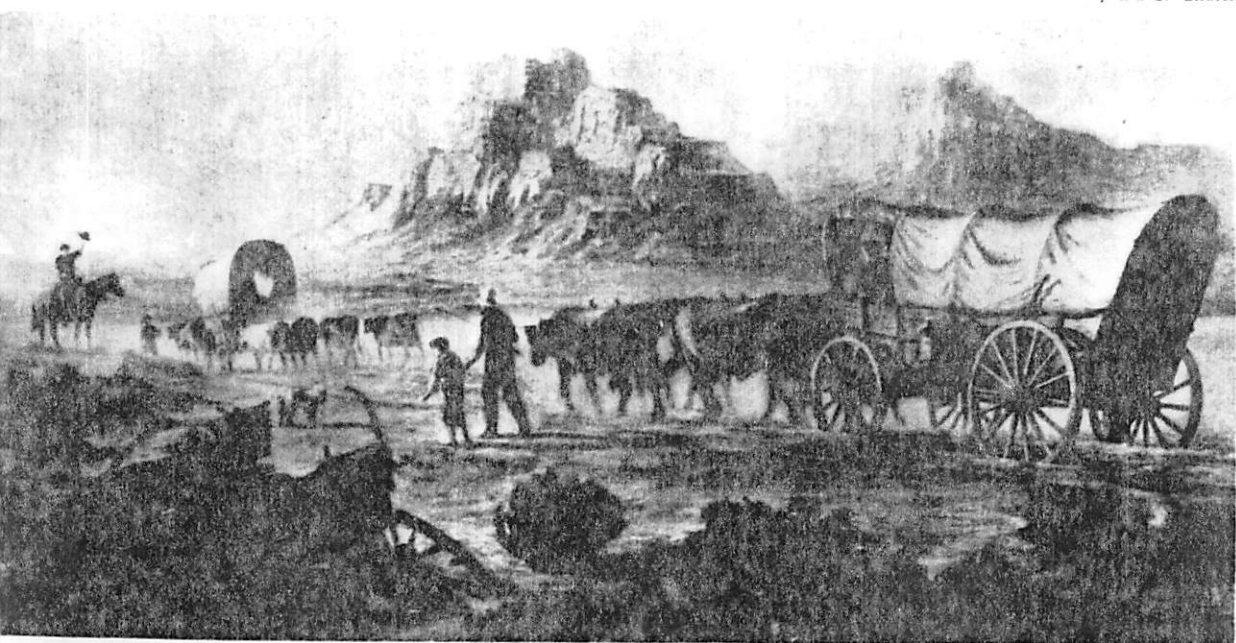
"On April 16, 1847, Brigham Young with a selected party of 148, including three women, two children, and some of the strongest men, set out westward from Winter Quarters. Seventy-two prairie schooners, drawn by mules, horses, and oxen, stretched out far over hill and valley toward the land of promise. This was the vanguard company going into the Far West to find the place where the entire people could secure peace in a haven of rest.

"The emigrants consisted of well-tempered frontiersmen who had received their training by previously establishing colonies on several American frontiers.

"Brigham divided the pioneer band into groups patterned after the organization used by Moses in ancient Israel. He himself was the Lieutenant General; with Stephen Markham, Colonel; and John Pack, Major. There were also 14 captains. This method of dividing companies into hundreds, fifties and tens, with captains over each, was followed

Pioneers crossing the plains to Utah

Photo — courtesy L.D.S. Church



by all the caravans of modern Israelites, which they called themselves, as they traveled toward what they termed their new Zion," Mr. Madsen continued.

"Did Brigham Young and his group have trouble with the Indians while crossing the plains?" Sharon inquired.

"No serious trouble, Sharon," he replied. "However, this pioneer company had hardly reached the open prairies when rumors spread that traders and Missourians were stirring up the Indians to plunder the emigrants. Men were put on guard at night; and during the daytime all extra men were ordered to travel beside the teams with their guns in readiness for quick action.

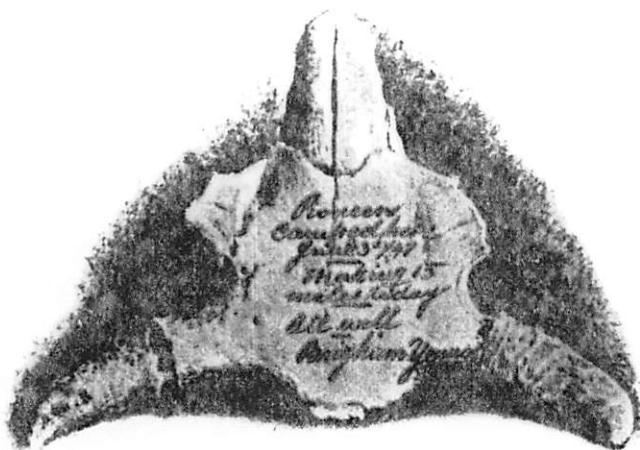


Photo — courtesy L.D.S. Church
Buffalo skull written on by Brigham Young

"When camp was made at night, the wagons were drawn in a circle with the livestock in the center. Everyone was in bed at nine o'clock, and the fires were put out. At seven o'clock the next morning they were again headed westward. Six days they traveled — but on Sundays they rested and worshipped the Lord.

"As they moved forward they traveled for days over country where the grass had been burned by the Indians. Large herds of buffalo were often seen, and the hunters of the company provided fresh meat for the travelers. Be-

tween ravages of fire and herds of buffalo, little food remained for the pioneers' horses and cattle."

"But why did the Indians burn the grass?" John asked.

"To clear the ground so new grass could grow better," Mr. Madsen replied.

Pueblo detachment

And then the instructor resumed, "When the emigrant company arrived at Fort Laramie, Wyoming, its members found waiting for them 17 church members from Mississippi who had spent the winter at Pueblo, Colorado. They had come to Pueblo with the sick members of the Mormon Battalion by the way of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Six of the 17 Mississippi company were women. Thus when Brigham Young's company arrived in Utah, there were nine women instead of three, as is sometimes thought.

"After talking with the emigrants from Mississippi, Brigham Young said to his counselor, Heber C. Kimball, 'Heber, have Amasa M. Lyman see me at once.'

"Yes, Brigham."

"And when Mr. Lyman came, the pioneer leader instructed, 'Amasa, Mr. Crow, one of the Mississippi emigrants who recently joined us, has informed me that there are over 200 more Battalion members and Mississippi emigrants who had the intention of meeting us at this point on our westward route. Since they have failed to arrive, I want you and three other men to go on horseback toward Pueblo. When you meet that group of emigrants and Battalion members, bring them along our trail to the Salt Lake Valley, or to whatever region we may select for our new home.'

"Very well, Brother Brigham," Amasa replied; and soon thereafter Mr. Lyman and three companions started southward toward Pueblo.

people there. We will build our homes in the Great Basin,' President Young replied.

"I have just ridden through that country, President Young, and I assure you that it is the driest, most God-forsaken region I have ever seen. Our people will perish if we settle them in the Salt Lake Valley,' Brannan argued.

"The Great Basin offers exactly the proper kind of a country in which to settle and build our homes. If we continued on to such a fertile land as you have described, soon thousands of non-Mormons would be our neighbors. We would lose the seclusion which we are seeking, and our people would be once again open to trouble with the non-church members. A heavy immigration might take place to the coast soon, and our people would then be absorbed into the mass of non-Mormons, with the probable loss of our religious faith. No, Sam, we are not going to settle our people in California,' President Young concluded.

"Brannan, however, continued for several days to try to persuade President Young to lead his people on to California; but the Mormon leader flatly refused, telling Mr. Brannan that it was the will of the Lord for them to settle in that dry, barren desert," the teacher concluded.

Orson Pratt's vanguard company

"A few days before reaching the Great Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and some of the members of the group were taken ill with mountain fever. On July 12, the Mormon leader called Orson Pratt to his bedside and said, 'Brother Pratt, I want you to take a group of the strongest men with the best equipment, and travel ahead of the main company. Make a road into the Salt Lake Valley. As soon as I am able to travel, the rest of us will follow you.'

"Very well, President Young, we shall be on our way soon," Orson Pratt answered. Before an hour had passed, Pratt's vanguard group, consisting of 41

Brigham Young and pioneer band meet Jim Bridger

Photo — courtesy Wheelwright Lithographing Co.



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Crossing the Plains, from mural painting by Edward T. Grigware

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